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RECLAMATION OF THE DISABLED FROM THE INDUSTRIAL ARMY

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The United States, following the example of other warring nations, has adopted a plan to physically reconstruct, functionally re-educate, and completely rehabilitate all of her disabled soldiers. Congress, in June, 1917, pledged this service by passing the War Risk Insurance Act. The necessity of conserving our man power, as well as the debt which the nation owes these disabled soldiers, makes such a program obligatory.

By physical reconstruction is meant the continued and complete medical and surgical treatment until the greatest possible restoration of the disabled parts has been secured. Functional re-education consists of various methods to restore function in a disabled part, or to train other members to new work, or to teach the amputated cases the use of artificial members. In other words, it is combining with our surgical procedure, which aims at his physical repair, certain other therapeutic measures which will help the patient to functionally overcome his handicap.

Rehabilitation, or the refitting of the disabled man to an independent economic position in society, consists of measures which are neither medical nor surgical but which can often begin during the course of his medical treatment. Thus, the work of rehabilitation laps over into the hospital treatment and, in many cases, continues for an indefinite period after the work of the medical officers has been completed. In the majority of cases the functional re-education, especially the occupational therapy, can be made so practicable that it will dovetail in with the rehabilitation work.

Therefore, while a portion of this work must be conducted while the man is under military control, and a portion must be carried on after the man becomes a civilian, yet, as far as the man himself is concerned, it will be a gradual, unbroken reclamation to a useful life whatever his handicap may be.

No matter how honorable the wounds or how honorable the disease that overtakes one, no man likes to be classed as "disabled."

It sounds too much like being "put on the shelf." In warfare, however, a certain percentage of the soldiers are bound to become disabled; very few need remain so. The number of disabilities sufficiently serious to place a man in the discard are very rare. Practically every man, no matter how handicapped he may be, can come back. In fact a handicap puts more fight into a man, makes him strive harder than ever before, and results quite often in his making good to a greater extent than if he had never been disabled.

A soldier who lost both legs recently said: "Watch me! I am going to make good with both feet." And he has. This is the spirit! Determination and grit—stick-to-it-iveness—are the qualities which every disabled man must have or must acquire in order to crawl out or jump out of that hated class—The Disabled. As long as the brain power of a man remains, enabling him to will, to choose and to persevere in effort, he is a long way from being a permanent cripple or a permanent invalid.

As Mike Dowling, who lost both hands and both legs when a young man and climbed up to be a bank president in spite of his physical handicap, delights in saying: "I feel sorry for a cripple and thank God that I am not a cripple. A man may be worth a hundred thousand dollars a year from his neck up, and worth only one dollar and a half per week from his neck down." In other words, being "disabled" is only a temporary state. A man is disabled in the early days while the doctor is helping cure him. Being "crippled" is a permanent state. A man is crippled only to that extent to which he allows his physical handicap to put him down and out. If he ceases to be an economic factor in society—an earning, serving unit—he is a cripple. But if in spite of his handicap he overcomes his disability, trains himself for work and becomes a productive citizen once more, he is no longer classed as a cripple.

A man living in Kansas, who had been confined to his bed for years, the result of a form of paralysis, had become the owner and superintendent of a large publishing business. He was a printer formerly. When asked to describe how an invalid in his condition could accomplish so much, he said: "I am not an invalid: I am a Business Man." His advice was that no matter how permanently disease ties up the body, keep the mind alert and active. Make it work for you. Become independent. The man who gives up to

his disabilities is an "invalid"; the man who overcomes them is a force.

As a nation we have failed to teach such ideas as these to our boys and girls. We have failed to help our citizens who have become permanently handicapped back to the road where they can go on by their own initiative. Too often the disabled man has passively accepted his fate, and his friends have allowed him to loaf, or to accept a position where no incentive or future existed, such as the proverbial watchman. These cripples and invalids, seeing the money made by professional beggars, have even drifted into that class. Every nation in this war has awakened to the fact that some men with the worst kinds of handicaps have become successful, useful citizens. Therefore, why cannot all men and especially the soldiers disabled because of war duty become successful? And so with one accord these nations have provided the means of reclaiming their disabled soldiers and of giving them proper training for the future so that they can make good by their own efforts. The medical department of the army at the very beginning of this war began to make plans for reclaiming these soldiers. After other wars our country provided soldiers' homes for many of the disabled, or provided pensions to help the crippled man eke out a living at some mediocre job. The spirit of young America today would not be satisfied with such an arrangement. They have made the great sacrifice for their country in her efforts to give liberty to the world. Their country therefore must provide a future of liberty and independence for them. Thus backed by every branch of the government and coöperating with other agencies who have a part in the work, the medical department of the army has evolved the plans for the physical reconstruction and rehabilitation of disabled soldiers.

There is another soldier, the industrial soldier, the soldier of the second line of defense, the man who belongs to that great industrial army which is just as essential to the winning of this war as is the military army, and the man who becomes disabled and wounded without the glorification that comes from such wounds when received on the battlefield. During the last decade a new specialty has developed in the medical profession which deals with the human maintenance in industry. This must not be confused with the work of the old-time company doctor which consisted chiefly in

rendering emergency treatment to the injured employes. Rather this new specialty of industrial medicine and surgery includes everything necessary for the complete supervision of the health of the employes. Human maintenance in industry consists in applying the general principles of medicine and surgery to a large group of people as a unit. While individuals receive special medical or surgical care whenever needed, yet the chief purpose of this specialty is prevention: prevention of disease or accidents among the entire group of employes; prevention of undue loss of time when injury or disease assails an employe; prevention of deformities and permanent disabilities; prevention of inefficiency on the job when traceable to some physical condition; in fact, the prevention of everything which would tend to undermine the physical or mental welfare of the working force. In order to accomplish this, many of our largest industries have developed a staff of capable physicians and surgeons who spend part, or all, of their time at the plant. Here, by being on the job—in the front line trench of industry—they are not only in the strategic position to study and apply every phase of prevention, but also to render immediate and proper medical and surgical care to every sick or injured employe, which after all is only another form of prevention.

This comprehensive system of industrial medicine and surgery has been adopted by many of the larger employers. Today approximately one-tenth of the workers of the country are receiving the benefits, to a more or less degree, of this work. There still remain however many more large concerns, the small employer, the householder with his domestic help, the farmer with his hired men, and many others who have never considered it a duty to safeguard the health and welfare of those working for them. When we consider that 40,000,000 people in the United States are engaged in gainful occupations, we can then comprehend what the adoption of a nation-wide program of disease and accident prevention would mean to the economic existence of our country.

But in spite of all our prevention methods, we have, and will continue to have, the disabled employe in our midst. The man who is no longer able to continue at heavy work because of a damaged heart or circulatory apparatus; the man who develops tuberculosis, and, even though cured, is afraid to or advised against returning to his former occupation, or is rejected from one job after another be-

cause of his damaged lung; the epileptic who, to safeguard the concern against possible compensation, is fired as soon as his condition is known; the men with hernias, with flat feet and many other anatomical conditions that make them inefficient, as well as the armless and legless and others seriously handicapped, the result of injuries; —all make up our army of disabled men. Every year adds to the total of incompetents who, on account of disease or accidents, are prematurely thrown into the scrap heap, because their handicap prevented them from continuing at their old occupations.

A few industries have salvaged these disabled and made them efficient and independent. Some industries have given these employes easy jobs where they could make a living. But the very softness of the job robbed them of all incentive, and the bitterness engendered from dying ambition added to their incompetency, so that many of these drifted on into the scrap heap. Other industries settled with their injured workman when they were legally responsible and then dismissed him. Their disabled, for whom they were morally responsible, were scrapped without a settlement. These men, trained for certain occupations, who meet with permanent handicaps, are the waste products of our industrial life. Too often when employed, they are ineffective because they are thrown into the job without considering their physical fitness for it. Again they are given the positions of watchman, flagman, messenger service, porters and similar work when, with proper training, their full mental energy and remaining physical capacities could make them highly efficient in much more gainful vocations.

The most unfortunate group of disabled men are those who cease to be employed by the concern responsible for their disability. Other employers are not interested in them, do not feel responsible for them. They drift from one job to another, constantly dropping into a lower scale, until finally they relinquish all effort to work. These make up the loafers, the beggar on the corner, the shoestring merchant on the street, the poor physically handicapped, the mentally debased flotsam and jetsam of our civilization. The great lesson, therefore, which industry can learn from the plans of the army to reclaim the disabled soldier is the complete rehabilitation of the disabled from the industrial army.

We have done excellent work in prevention. We have done our utmost to physically reconstruct the disabled employe. But

have we not been neglectful of the end result from the economic and social standpoint? These handicapped soldiers from industry must not only be physically cured, but they must be retrained for new work when their disability prevents return to the old job; they must be given suitable employment in a position that affords them equal income and the opportunity for initiative and advancement; adequate compensation must be paid them for disabilities directly the result of occupation, without derogatory reaction upon their future opportunities; and proper supervision must be maintained over them to see that their rehabilitation is completed and so remains.

Today, as a result of our plans for the reclaiming of the war disabled, the country is awakening to its responsibility toward the civilian disabled. There is every reason to believe that before long Congress will be enacting a law for the vocational rehabilitation of the industrial handicapped just as it is now meeting the same question for the disabled soldier. Man power will win this war, man power at the front over there, and man power in the great industrial army—the second line of defense—over here. As a nation we are united in one great purpose—our determination for an unconditional victory. Our every motive must be toward this end. Therefore every effort expended for the conservation of human life and the reclamation of all human energy in both the military and industrial armies will be of the greatest aid in achieving this victory.